



# ARTHUR WILLIAM RADFORD

15 August 1953 — 15 August 1957

**A**rthur Radford was born in Chicago, Illinois, on 27 February 1896. After growing up in Illinois and Iowa, he entered the US Naval Academy in 1912. Following graduation in 1916, he served during World War I on the battleship USS *South Carolina* in the Atlantic Fleet. Radford realized a boyhood dream to fly when he entered Navy flight training in 1920. He earned his wings the following year. For the next twenty years, he alternated among assignments with the fleet, naval air stations, and the Navy's Bureau of Aeronautics in Washington, rising from lieutenant to captain.

Shortly before the United States entered World War II, Radford became Chief of the Navy's Aviation Training Division. Here he oversaw the expansion of the training program to meet the greatly increased requirements for Navy pilots during the early stages of the war. Promoted to rear admiral, he commanded a carrier division in the Pacific during 1943. After a brief assignment at the Navy Department, he returned to the Pacific in November 1944 to command another carrier division. For the remainder of the war, he directed carrier attacks against Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and Tokyo.

After a series of staff and command assignments in the immediate post-war period, Radford, now a vice admiral, became Vice Chief of Naval Operations in January 1948. In April 1949, as that tour was ending, the "revolt of the admirals" erupted in Washington. Senior naval officers objected strenuously to the Secretary of Defense's cancellation of a new "super" carrier. The Navy wanted the new carrier, which could carry larger planes, to establish its role in strategic nuclear warfare. The ensuing controversy led to a congressional

**Admiral Arthur W. Radford**  
United States Navy



Rear Admiral Radford, *right*, on the bridge of the USS *Yorktown*, October 1944.

investigation, and Admiral Radford was called to testify. He supported the Navy's position and, in discussing future operations, argued that the threat of an atomic blitz would neither deter nor win a war. In retrospect, Radford's argument appears ironic, since, as Chairman, he would become a champion of "massive retaliation."

Upon being promoted to admiral in April 1949, Radford returned to the Pacific as Commander in Chief of the Pacific Command (CINCPAC). Forces under his command provided air and naval gunfire support to UN forces in the Korean War. Radford's command also sent US military advisers to assist the French in Indochina in the war against the Communist Viet Minh.

Impressed with Radford's performance as CINCPAC, President Eisenhower appointed him Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Admiral Radford assumed his duties on 15 August 1953. During Radford's tenure, President Eisenhower adopted the "New Look," a national security policy that emphasized Air Force and Navy forces over Army ground forces and provided for massive atomic retaliation in the event of general war. Radford vigorously supported the new policy and convinced a majority of his reluctant JCS colleagues to accept it as well.

In one controversial initiative related to the "New Look" and force planning, Admiral Radford did not succeed. During 1956 Radford proposed to the Chiefs drastic cuts in



Rear Admiral Radford being passed to his flagship, the USS *Saratoga*, in a breeches buoy, November 1944.

Army forces as a means of staying within the President's stringent fiscal ceiling. Units overseas would be reduced to small atomic-armed task forces, and the Marines, with atomic weapons, would have responsibility for limited war operations. When this proposal leaked to the press, the reaction in Congress and among the NATO allies resulted in no further action being taken.

Under Radford's leadership, plans drawn up by the JCS resulted in the establishment of a new unified Continental Air Defense Command (CONAD) in 1954. The Joint Chiefs also undertook planning with the Canadian military for a North American Air Defense Command (NORAD), which was established in 1957.



Admiral Radford, *right*, with President Dwight D. Eisenhower and General Paul Ely, Chief of the French Armed Forces Staff, during a meeting in Washington to discuss the Indochina crisis, March 1954.

While Radford was Chairman, the Joint Chiefs of Staff dealt with a series of regional crises around the world, and Admiral Radford was always quick to advocate a strong US response. In late March 1954, when the French faced defeat at Dien Bien Phu, Radford on his own initiative convened a JCS meeting to consider a massive air strike in Vietnam. All the other JCS members opposed the idea, and President Eisenhower was unwilling to intervene unless important political conditions were met. They never were.

In the Formosa Straits crisis in early 1955, when the Chinese Communists seemed ready to attack the Nationalist-held islands of Quemoy and Matsu and then assault Formosa, Admiral Radford concluded that the situation could not be stabilized “without the Chinese Communists getting a bloody nose.” He favored a pre-emptive attack unless they ceased their buildup. If war came, Radford argued before the National Security Council, all the advantages would rest with the United States. President Eisenhower,

however, chose a more restrained, flexible approach, and the Chinese Communists backed away from military threats.

When President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal Company, triggering the Suez Crisis of 1956, Admiral Radford led a united JCS in recommending military action. Nasser must be stopped, they said, by military intervention if necessary. President Eisenhower disagreed and later took strong action to stop the invasion of Egypt launched by Britain, France, and Israel.

Admiral Radford retired from military service on 15 August 1957 but remained

active in national security matters. President Eisenhower and Secretary of Defense Neil McElroy continued to call on him for advice, and during the next several years he conducted studies for the government. He strongly supported President Eisenhower's call for reorganizing the Department of Defense in 1958 and urged Congress to strengthen the authority of the Chairman. In retirement, he served as a consultant for the Bankers' Trust Company and as a director of several other firms. Admiral Radford died at the Bethesda Naval Medical Center on 17 August 1973.

# Arthur William Radford

Admiral, USN

## Promotions

## Dates

	Temporary	Permanent
ENS. . . . .		03 Jun 16
LTJG . . . . .	01 Jul 17. . . . .	03 Jun 19
LT. . . . .	01 Jan 18 . . . . .	01 Jul 20
LCDR . . . . .		17 Feb 27
CDR . . . . .		01 Jul 36
CAPT. . . . .		01 Jan 42
RADM . . . . .	21 Jul 43. . . . .	07 Aug 47
VADM . . . . .	25 May 46	
ADM. . . . .		07 Apr 49

## Assignments

## Dates

	From	To
USS <i>South Carolina</i> . . . . .	1916. . . . .	1918
Aide on Staff, Division ONE, Battleship Force ONE, Atlantic Fleet . . . . .	1918. . . . .	1919
Aide on Staff and Flag Lieutenant, Division ONE, Pacific Fleet . . . . .	1919. . . . .	1920
Naval Air Station, Pensacola, FL . . . . .	1920. . . . .	1921
Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, Washington, DC. . . . .	1921. . . . .	1923
Aircraft Squadrons, Battle Fleet . . . . .	1923. . . . .	1925
VO Squadron ONE, Aircraft Squadrons, Battle Fleet . . . . .	1925. . . . .	1927
Naval Air Station, San Diego, CA. . . . .	1927. . . . .	1929
Aircraft Squadrons, Battle Fleet (additional duty commanding Alaskan Aerial Survey Detachment) . . . . .	1929. . . . .	1929
USS <i>Saratoga</i> . . . . .	1929. . . . .	1930
Commanding Officer, VF Squadron ONE-B, Aircraft Squadrons, Battle Fleet . . . . .	1930. . . . .	1931
Aide and Flag Secretary, Aircraft, Battle Force, US Fleet . . . . .	1931. . . . .	1932
Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, Washington, DC. . . . .	1932. . . . .	1935
Navigation Officer, USS <i>Wright</i> . . . . .	1935. . . . .	1936
Staff, Aircraft, Battle Force. . . . .	1936. . . . .	1937
Commanding Officer, Naval Air Station,		

Seattle, WA . . . . .	1937 . . . . .	1940
<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Dates</b>	
	From	To
Executive Officer, USS <i>Yorktown</i> . . . . .	1940 . . . . .	1941
Office of Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Washington, DC . . . . .	1941 . . . . .	1941
TENTH Naval District (establishment Naval Air Station, Trinidad, BWI and duty as Commanding Officer) . . . . .	1941 . . . . .	1941
Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, Washington, DC . . . . .	1941 . . . . .	1943
Carrier Division TWO . . . . .	1943 . . . . .	1943
Commander, Carrier Division ELEVEN . . . . .	1943 . . . . .	1943
Chief of Staff and Aide, Aircraft, Pacific Fleet . . . . .	1943 . . . . .	1944
Assistant Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Air, Navy Department (additional duty alternate member Special Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee on Reorganization of National Defense) . . . . .	1944 . . . . .	1944
Commander, Carrier Division SIX, US Pacific Fleet . . . . .	1944 . . . . .	1945
Commanding Officer, Fleet Air, Seattle, WA . . . . .	1945 . . . . .	1945
Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Air) . . . . .	1946 . . . . .	1947
Commander, SECOND Task Fleet . . . . .	1947 . . . . .	1947
Vice Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Washington, DC . . . . .	1948 . . . . .	1949
Commander in Chief, Pacific and High Commissioner, Trust Territory of Pacific Islands . . . . .	1949 . . . . .	1953
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, DC. . . . .	1953 . . . . .	1957

## Principal US Military Decorations

Navy Distinguished Service Medal (with 3 gold stars)  
 Legion of Merit (with gold star)